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For Immediate Release

Greenup/Lewis County Drug Court to hold 4th graduation May 26 — 23 participants complete program —

FRANKFORT, Ky., May 16, 2006 — The Greenup/Lewis County Drug Court will hold its fourth graduation ceremony to recognize 23 participants on Friday, May 26, at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 607 Main Street, Greenup. Circuit Judge Lewis Nicholls, who volunteers as the Drug Court judge for Greenup and Lewis counties, will preside over the ceremony. Invited guests include representatives from local law enforcement, probation and parole programs, and treatment facilities. The Greenup/Lewis Drug Court began as a pilot project in January 2002 and became operational in October 2002.

Background Information: Drug Court is a court-supervised treatment alternative designed to address the high relapse rate of illicit drug use and the occurrence of nonviolent drug related crimes. The mission of Drug Court is to offer a criminal justice environment that stops illicit drug use and related criminal activity, and to promote a positive life change through substance abuse education and treatment. The program consists of three phases and aftercare, and lasts an average of one to two years.

Drug Court staff and participants work together to develop individual program plans with specific responsibilities and goals with timetables. Plans include group, family and individual counseling; frequent and random urine testing; education and vocational training; scheduled payments of restitution, child support and court fees; and health and community activities. Participants report directly to their Drug Court judge, who rewards progress and sanctions noncompliance. When participants successfully complete the program, charges may be dismissed through diversion, or conditional discharge may be granted through probation. Judges who participate in Drug Court volunteer their time to the program, and much of the program's funding comes from federal grants and state matching funds approved through the Kentucky General Assembly.

The success of Drug Court is being measured by the lives changed and the cost savings to Kentucky taxpayers. Since the program was implemented in 1993, the state has saved \$24.2 million by graduating 1,700 individuals from Drug Court instead of paying for their incarceration. A 2004 University of Kentucky evaluation revealed that two years after graduating from Drug Court, only 20 percent of Kentucky Drug Court graduates were convicted of a new felony offense, as opposed to 57.3 percent of non-Drug Court participants (with similar charges) who were convicted of a new felony offense. ###